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New York

President: Mr. Gurirab . . . . . (Namibia)

In the absence of the President, Mr. Ingólfsson (Iceland), Vice-President, took the Chair.

The meeting was called to order at 10.15 a.m.

Flood in Madagascar

The Acting President: Before turning to the item on our agenda this morning, may I, on behalf of the members of the Assembly and on my own behalf, extend to the Government and the people of Madagascar, recently struck by the flooding from cyclone Gloria, our deepest sympathy for the tragic loss of life and the extensive material damage.

May I also express the hope that the international community will demonstrate its solidarity by responding promptly and generously to any request from Madagascar for assistance in its present plight.

Agenda item 125 *(continued)*

Scale of assessments for the apportionment of the expenses of the United Nations

Report of the Fifth Committee (A/54/730/Add.2)

The Acting President: In the letter contained in document A/54/730/Add.2, the Secretary-General informs the President of the General Assembly that since the issuance of his communications contained in documents A/54/730 and addendum 1, Nicaragua has made the necessary payment to reduce its arrears below the amount specified in Article 19 of the Charter.

May I take it that the General Assembly duly takes note of the information contained in this document?

It was so decided.

The Acting President: I should also like to inform members that since the issuance this morning of document A/54/730/Add.2, the Marshall Islands has made the necessary payment to reduce its arrears below the amount specified in Article 19 of the Charter.

May I take it that the General Assembly duly takes note of this information?

It was so decided.

The Acting President: This information will be reflected in an addendum to document A/54/730, to be issued.

Agenda item 20 *(continued)*

Strengthening of the coordination of humanitarian and disaster relief assistance of the United Nations, including special economic assistance

(b) Special economic assistance to individual countries or regions

Draft resolution (A/54/L.79)

00-33917 (E)

This record contains the text of speeches delivered in English and of the interpretation of speeches delivered in the other languages. Corrections should be submitted to the original speeches only. They should be incorporated in a copy of the record and sent under the signature of a member of the delegation concerned to the Chief of the Verbatim Reporting Service, room C-178. Corrections will be issued after the end of the session in a consolidated corrigendum.

The Acting President: I now give the floor to the representative of Egypt to introduce draft resolution A/54/L.79.

Mr. Aboul Gheit (Egypt): It was with great sorrow that we received the news of the catastrophic floods in Mozambique and of the human tragedy that followed. In this regard, we would like to express our sincere condolences to the people and the Government of Mozambique.

In this context, on behalf of all African countries Members of the United Nations, and in solidarity with the people and the Government of Mozambique following the devastating floods that country faced, allow me to introduce the draft resolution contained in document A/54/L.79 to the General Assembly for consideration and adoption.

Before doing so, I shall read out the names of a number of Member States that have joined the list of sponsors of the draft resolution: Antigua and Barbuda, Argentina, Austria, Barbados, Belarus, Belgium, Bolivia, Brazil, Bulgaria, Canada, Chile, China, Colombia, Costa Rica, Croatia, Cuba, the Czech Republic, Denmark, Ecuador, El Salvador, Finland, Guyana, Haiti, Honduras, Hungary, Iceland, India, Indonesia, Ireland, Italy, Japan, the Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, Papua New Guinea, Poland, Portugal, Romania, San Marino, Slovakia, Slovenia, Solomon Islands, Spain, Sri Lanka, Suriname, Sweden, the Syrian Arab Republic, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Trinidad and Tobago, Ukraine, the United Arab Emirates, the United Kingdom, the United States of America, Uruguay and Venezuela.

I understand that a number of other States will also join the list of sponsors.

The principal message of the draft resolution is to call upon all the States Members of the United Nations, as well as multilateral organizations, non-governmental organizations and the United Nations system, to respond urgently and to continue to provide relief assistance to Mozambique in order to help the country in its efforts for rehabilitation and reconstruction following this unfortunate natural disaster. The preambular part of the draft resolution expresses concern about the loss of human lives and the extent of the destruction, and takes note of the appeal launched by the Government of Mozambique for emergency humanitarian aid.

The operative part of the draft resolution urges all international entities to provide emergency relief in order to mitigate the disastrous effects of this natural disaster. Finally, the draft resolution requests the Secretary-General to continue mobilizing and coordinating assistance for the required reconstruction of the infrastructure in Mozambique.

I should also like to take this opportunity to express our condolences and solidarity to the Government of Madagascar, which has been subjected to a disaster of almost the same magnitude.

Mr. Manele (Solomon Islands): I have the honour to make this statement on agenda item 20, sub-item (b), on behalf of the States members of the Pacific Islands Forum represented at the United Nations in New York: Australia, the Republic of the Fiji Islands, the Republic of the Marshall Islands, the Federated States of Micronesia, the Republic of Nauru, New Zealand, Papua New Guinea, the Independent State of Western Samoa, the Kingdom of Tonga, the Republic of Vanuatu and my own country, Solomon Islands.

We wish to convey our deepest sympathy to the countries of southern Africa, in particular to the Government and the people of the Republic of Mozambique, for the recent floods that have destroyed lives and caused extensive material damage. I should also like to take this opportunity to convey our deepest sympathy to the Government and the people of Madagascar.

The world was still recovering from the recent shocks caused by massive catastrophes in Turkey, Greece, China, Venezuela, India and Viet Nam when another devastating natural disaster struck. The devastating floods in Mozambique continue to confirm the increasing incidence and magnitude of natural disasters. It is estimated that natural disasters have killed more than 100,000 people over the past two years. Millions have lost their homes and livelihoods. Most of the victims are from developing countries.

Several small island developing States in our subregion are among those which have suffered from nature's wrath during the past two years. As a subregion that is prone and extremely vulnerable to natural disasters, and given our experience of human suffering resulting from the unavoidable destructive forces of nature, we sincerely join others in expressing our support for and solidarity with the Government and the people of

Mozambique in their efforts to cope with the serious consequences of the disaster.

We join the Secretary-General's appeal for international assistance for Mozambique. A number of countries in our region have already responded. The Government of Australia, for example, is providing 1.5 million Australian dollars to help the victims of the floods in Mozambique. This funding will be used to support rescue and food distribution operations, as well as to assist local communities rebuild their lives once the floods have subsided. Australia is also providing a further 250,000 Australian dollars to Zimbabwe and South Africa, which are also experiencing serious flooding. The Government of New Zealand is contributing approximately 500,000 New Zealand dollars through the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs for emergency relief supplies, and through the United Nations Children's Fund for replacement educational materials, and it is making a further contribution to the United Nations accelerated demining programme.

Contributions, including emergency humanitarian relief provided by Member States, United Nations specialized agencies and non-governmental organizations, will bring comfort to a part of Africa that is desperately struggling to create economic opportunities for its people. Urgent needs and concerns include shelter, food, clothing, safe drinking water and the prevention of the outbreak of diseases. Mozambique will continue to need concerted international support as it begins its rehabilitation and reconstruction. The United Nations has demonstrated its comparative advantage in soliciting international attention and mobilizing a concerted and timely response to such situations.

Finally, I wish to reiterate that efficient coordination at all levels is vital for disaster preparedness and emergency response. Information-sharing and early warning systems are essential elements for mitigating the impact of natural disasters. International cooperation to build disaster-preparedness capacity in developing countries, particularly in the most vulnerable, is critical. Above all, the increasing incidence of natural disasters demands a ready pool of resources, including financial resources that can be deployed and utilized immediately, thus minimizing human suffering. All these aspects are highlighted in resolution 54/233, entitled "International cooperation on humanitarian assistance in the field of natural disasters from relief to development", which the General Assembly adopted last year. Our countries collectively endorsed that resolution, and in the same spirit support the consensus adoption of the draft resolution on Mozambique contained in document A/54/L.79.

Mrs. Gittens-Joseph (Trinidad and Tobago): I wish to express the solidarity of the States members of the Latin American and Caribbean Group with the Government and people of Mozambique due to the tragic loss of human lives and extensive destruction of property and infrastructure caused by the unprecedented floods which recently afflicted the country.

As an expression of support to Mozambique at this difficult time, the States members of the Latin American and Caribbean Group agreed as a group to co-sponsor draft resolution A/54/L.79, entitled "Assistance to Mozambique following the devastating floods".

Many of the countries of the Latin American and Caribbean region, having suffered natural disasters themselves, know first-hand the devastating effects of these events, such as the adverse impact on the economic and social development efforts, infrastructure, health, food security and general welfare of the population.

We would have seen on the mass media images of the thousands who were stranded for days in trees and on rooftops in the affected areas of Mozambique. It is reported that nearly 2 million persons have been affected by the floods, with hundreds of persons killed and the official death-toll still rising. An estimated 250,000 persons are crowded into enormous makeshift camps and about 100 tons of food need to be moved every day to feed these victims.

This natural disaster will undoubtedly pose a major setback to the economy of Mozambique, with the additional threat of disease. The dredging of minefields as the flood recedes will complicate mine-clearing efforts and the shifting explosives pose a threat to the public.

The States members of the Latin American and Caribbean Group fully support the appeal made by both the President of the Republic of Mozambique and the Secretary-General of the United Nations to the international community for assistance to Mozambique in dealing with this crisis. It is imperative that Member States, specialized agencies and relevant bodies of the United Nations, international financial institutions and non-governmental organizations respond urgently to offer emergency relief and aid for reconstruction efforts. Those Governments and agencies which have come to the assistance of Mozambique must be commended, but the

enormity of the crisis demands more urgent assistance from the international community.

States members of the Latin American and Caribbean Group wish to reiterate their sympathy for the Government and people of Mozambique as they face this daunting experience. It is hoped that the assistance rendered by the international community will contribute to a large extent to steering Mozambique back on to the path of economic recovery and national reconstruction.

I also wish to convey solidarity and sympathy to the Government and people of Madagascar on the recent flooding which affected their country as well.

Mr. Pal (India): Thank you, Sir, for calling this special meeting of the General Assembly to consider what the international community can do to show its solidarity with the people of Mozambique.

May I begin by conveying our deepest sympathies to the people of Mozambique. On behalf of the Government of India, Prime Minister Vajpayee has conveyed to President Chissano the heartfelt condolences of the Government and the people of India.

Through bilateral channels, we have sent 1 million rupees' worth of medicines to Mozambique as our immediate contribution to the relief efforts and will consult with the Government of Mozambique on what more we can do.

May I also convey through you, Sir, our deepest admiration for the courage and resilience which the people of Mozambique have shown, faced by this enormous disaster, and for the dedication and energy with which the Government of Mozambique has taken up the challenge of meeting the immediate needs of rescue and relief and the longer-term task of rehabilitation.

As we were reminded in the briefings which we received yesterday from representatives of the United Nations system at the very timely meeting of the Economic and Social Council organized by its President, the international community, which has responded swiftly and generously in Mozambique's hour of crisis, must stay the course. The tasks of rehabilitation and reconstruction will be as daunting as those of immediate relief. The danger is that, as the floods recede, so might international attention, not least from the media. It is important that all friends of Mozambique continue to provide the support that its Government and people will need as they set about rebuilding after the disaster.

We are honoured to be a co-sponsor of the draft resolution contained in document A/54/L.79, submitted to this Assembly.

Mrs. Shestack (United States of America): The United States expresses its condolences for the tragedy which has befallen Mozambique and the other countries of southern Africa. The American people and the United States Government sympathize with the Mozambican people and the others as they struggle against the after-effects of the terrible floods which have swept through the area.

We have already taken urgent steps to respond to this natural disaster. The United States is proud once again to bring our resources and capacity to bear in order to be one of the countries at the forefront of the response to this emergency, as we have done in so many other instances around the world at other times.

Since the American Ambassador declared a disaster in Mozambique on 7 February, the United States has committed over $50 million to the southern African region for flood relief. Most of this has been directed to Mozambique.

The United States Agency for International Development provided to Mozambique $8 million in emergency food aid; $4 million for search and rescue, that is, 13 contract aircraft and a Miami-Dade emergency rescue team; $723,000 for emergency relief supplies, such as blankets, plastic sheeting, health supplies and water jugs; and a 25-member disaster assistance response team.

Our Coast Guard has contributed a relief coordination cell. Our Department of Defense deployed a humanitarian assistance survey team to Mozambique and South Africa on 17 February and delivered two planeloads of relief supplies. Operation Atlas Response, deployed by United States European Command on 7 March, has established a civil-military operations centre to facilitate coordination of international relief efforts. It is equipped with heavy-lift helicopters and C-130 aircraft that can send real-time video to relief coordinators in Maputo.

The United States Department of Treasury is moving to forgive the official bilateral debt owed by

Mozambique to the United States Government. This is approximately $4.9 million. The United States has also provided $25,000 of assistance each to Zimbabwe, Botswana and South Africa, which have also been hit by flooding.

An Army Corps of Engineers team is also preparing to do damage assessments for dams in Botswana, Zambia and Zimbabwe. The representative of Trinidad and Tobago mentioned that there are problems with shifting landmines, which may have been dislodged by the flood waters. Our mine experts have been looking into that as well and have come to the preliminary assessment that the problem is a bit less severe than was originally thought, but we are dealing with that aspect of the problem as well.

We recognize the immensity of the destruction in Mozambique and sincerely hope that these contributions will help to alleviate some of the human suffering of the affected people. We appeal to others to demonstrate generosity in meeting the challenge of reacting to this dreadful disaster.

Mr. Wibisono (Indonesia): I am addressing the General Assembly in my capacity as President of the Economic and Social Council to report on the results of the Council's historic meeting yesterday, which was dedicated to the situation in Mozambique.

As the Assembly is aware, one of the Economic and Social Council's main mandates, as envisaged by the Charter of the United Nations, is coordination. And perhaps one of the most important areas requiring coordination is the provision of humanitarian assistance in the face of natural disasters.

As a result of this tragic situation in Mozambique, and after consultation with the members of the Bureau of the Economic and Social Council, I decided to convene yesterday's unprecedented meeting so that the Council could be briefed by the Permanent Representative of Mozambique on the current situation in his country, as well as by representatives of a number of key United Nations programmes working on the ground in Mozambique.

In addition to the briefing by Mr. Carlos Dos Santos, Permanent Representative of the Republic of Mozambique, the Council was briefed by representatives of the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, the World Food Programme, the United Nations Children's Fund and the United Nations Development Programme.

The response of the Council to this initiative was most positive. Participation at the meeting was at a high level, with many Governments entering into discussion following the briefing. There was unanimous agreement on the usefulness of the briefing, and the Council subsequently authorized me to immediately transmit to the Government and the people of Mozambique a statement of support for them in their plight.

That statement will be issued as an official document of the Council, but allow me to briefly inform the General Assembly of the statement's content. Essentially, the Council expressed its profound sympathy to the Government and the people of Mozambique in view of the tragic situation resulting from the furious flood waters that have swept across the nation. The Council called upon Governments, the United Nations and its specialized agencies and bodies, the international financial institutions, non-governmental organizations and the private sector to continue to intensify their efforts in a coordinated manner so as to provide a continuum of relief and assistance to Mozambique, leading to the eventual reconstruction and development of the country.

To this end, the Council decided to ensure that the next humanitarian segment of its substantive session, in the year 2000, would address the issue of the coordination of United Nations humanitarian and disaster-relief assistance to Mozambique. In this way the Council will ensure that it follows up on its mandated task to oversee the coordination of humanitarian assistance.

The Economic and Social Council will remain seized of this important matter, as will, I am confident, the General Assembly.

Mr. Fonseca (Brazil): The delegation of Brazil associates itself with the statement made earlier by Trinidad and Tobago on behalf of the Latin American and Caribbean Group.

The Brazilian delegation would like to extend to the Government and the people of Mozambique its deepest sympathy and solidarity. Brazil is a sponsor of draft resolution A/54/L.79 and supports all efforts of the international community to provide relief to Mozambique. Our common cultural heritage and shared language are the foundation of the very close friendship between Brazil and Mozambique.

The recent floods in Mozambique have claimed a heavy toll of lives and destroyed crops and infrastructure.

Health conditions are deemed critical, and the need for clean water, medicines and shelter is urgent. The Brazilian people are following with a profound sense of solidarity the events in Mozambique, and my Government has organized an airlift of 10 tons of medicines to contribute to the relief efforts.

We are aware, however, all the efforts deployed so far still fall short of what is required to meet the needs in terms of both emergency relief and reconstruction. It is important that donor countries continue to provide assistance and mobilize the necessary funds bilaterally and through the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs and other humanitarian actors.

We wholeheartedly hope that, with the support of the international community, Mozambique will be able to overcome in a short period of time the consequences of this natural disaster of catastrophic proportions. To that end, it is essential that we maintain the momentum of international aid, from emergency relief to reconstruction, rehabilitation and development.

Finally, we would like to take this opportunity to extend our solidarity to the other countries of the region that have also been affected by the floods.

Mr. Monteiro (Portugal): I am speaking on behalf of the European Union.

Let me first express the sincere appreciation of the European Union to the President of the General Assembly for having convened this plenary meeting of the Assembly to consider this very timely draft resolution. The tragic catastrophe in Mozambique, brought about by the unrelenting floods, is indeed an appropriate reason to meet here today.

The widespread loss of life and the extensive destruction of property and infrastructure have brought the country to a standstill and seriously risk setting back many years the social and economic development of one of the miracles of Africa. This is a reason for serious concern.

At various forums in the United Nations we debate the importance of ensuring that post-conflict periods are adequately supported by the international community so as to foster the creation and development of strong democratic institutions based on the rule of law, respect for human rights and equitable economic development. In all these areas Mozambique has experienced enormous successes over the past decade, in part due to the commitment and hard work of its people and leaders and the support of the international community. Legislative and presidential elections were recently held, and despite difficulties these elections were unanimously considered by the international community and the United Nations to have been free and fair and to have strengthened democracy and the rule of law in the country.

It is unfortunate that these tragic floods have come to interrupt this remarkable process of transition from war to reconstruction, rehabilitation and development. But Mozambicans have proved their resilience before, and in the words of President Chissano "will rebuild again". This obstinate desire to nurture and preserve the rewards of peace has to be supported and encouraged if Mozambique is to continue to be a beacon of peace and development in the subregion. The international community must come to the rescue.

Let me recall here the words of the European Union Development and Humanitarian Aid Commissioner, Mr. Poul Nielson, which I already mentioned yesterday at the historic meeting of the Economic and Social Council convened by its President. Mr. Nielson said,

> "The European Union will stand together with the victims to rebuild clinics and schools, roads and bridges, as well as cleaning mines washed down by the floods. Farmers and traders will be helped to rebuild their livelihoods."

The European Union member States and the European Community have already provided very substantial help to Mozambique since the outset of this crisis, and I am pleased to say that the response on our side was very positive as well as timely. In this regard, I would mention that the European Community has announced that it will increase its development assistance to Mozambique for the year 2000 to 150 million euros. Commissioner Nielson announced last week that an additional amount of 25 million euros will be made available for emergency assistance needs.

Let me also praise the fact that United Nations agencies are fully engaged in bringing the necessary assistance to Mozambique and have already put in place the coordination mechanisms with the arrival of the United Nations Disaster Assessment and Coordination (UNDAC) Team after the first floods. The presence of the Special Humanitarian Envoy for Mozambique has certainly contributed to reinforcing these coordination mechanisms. In this connection, let me emphasize the

need for a well coordinated effort between the Mozambican authorities and donors, both in the present phase of emergency relief and subsequently, to make the link between emergency aid and rehabilitation and development assistance more effective and coherent. We are following the plans under way to convene an international donors' conference to assist Mozambique in its rehabilitation and reconstruction effort with the support of the United Nations Development Programme.

It is the duty of us all not to let Mozambique down at this moment of need. That is why the European Union and its member States fully support, and have co-sponsored, the draft resolution contained in document A/54/L.79. The European Union member States and the European Community are joining efforts in order to assist in guaranteeing that the gains made over the last 10 years are not washed away by rain in two months. The great efforts and sacrifices made by Mozambicans over the last few years cannot be wasted. Mozambique counts on us all.

Mr. Kumalo (South Africa): I thank the President for calling this meeting this morning.

I stand here to support the statement made by the Ambassador of Egypt on behalf of the African Group.

Our deepest sympathy goes out to our brothers and sisters in Mozambique. The cruel tragedy that has befallen our neighbours is not only one of human disaster, but also of economic devastation. The extensive media coverage of the flooding disaster has provided us with a sense of the extent of the devastation that has wrecked Mozambique. But those are only glimpses of the true need that exists.

An estimated 1 million people have been left homeless, of whom 300,000 need urgent assistance. The death toll is only gradually coming to light as the water recedes in places, and it is expected to rise into the thousands. Apart from the human disaster, crops and livestock, health and education services and infrastructure have been completely wiped out. It is feared that diseases such as malaria and cholera will further compound the situation.

In response to this devastation, Member States and aid agencies have been generously providing assistance. This includes assistance from fellow developing countries, which is much appreciated. That assistance has already brought some relief to those who were worst affected by floods. Despite those efforts, the situation in Mozambique has barely begun to improve. Yesterday the rains returned to the area. Immediate assistance is still required, in addition to that which has already arrived.

Despite our also being victims of the floods, South Africa, as a concerned neighbour, is assisting Mozambique to the best of our abilities. Based on our first-hand knowledge of the situation, we should like to make the following call on the international community.

We would strongly recommend that Member States consult with the Government of Mozambique before dispatching assistance. Specific situations require specific responses, and the authorities in Mozambique are in the best position to provide guidance on what is needed on the ground.

We also believe that the current disaster relief needs to be combined with rehabilitation, reconstruction and development. Without reconstruction of the infrastructure, disaster relief cannot be distributed.

Lastly, relief assistance is only an initial stopgap measure. The true economic, infrastructure and developmental needs are yet to be addressed. We call on donor communities to continue assisting in a thorough and sustained manner, and we hope that they will continue to remain seized of this matter.

This is the reason why we believe that the adoption of this draft resolution this morning will be a first step in helping Mozambique regain its livelihood again.

The Acting President: Before giving the floor to the next speaker, I should like to call the attention of members to the sponsorship of draft resolution A/54/L.79, which was introduced earlier.

May I remind the sponsors, including those whose names were read out during the introduction, that they are invited to sign the list of sponsors maintained by the Secretariat. May I therefore request those delegations that wish to co-sponsor the draft resolution and that have not yet done so to please approach the Secretariat.

Mr. von Kaufmann (Canada): Canada joins the international community in co-sponsoring the draft resolution before the General Assembly today and in expressing its solidarity with the people of Mozambique and southern Africa in the face of this tragic natural disaster.

Canada has joined in the international effort to assist the people of Mozambique in their efforts to overcome the present challenge. In addition to the $1.625 million that Canada has already provided for immediate assistance to the victims of the flood, the Canadian Government announced Wednesday an additional $10 million for further flood relief and reconstruction efforts in Mozambique and neighbouring countries.

Canada's assistance will provide food, blankets, medicine, shelter, clean water and emergency air transport for the victims. Two Canadian Forces humanitarian aid Airbus flights are scheduled to leave soon to transport relief and reconstruction supplies, such as picks, shovels, hoes, water pumps, plastic sheeting, blankets, chlorine tablets, soap and jerrycans to assist in the relief effort. Canada has further allocated $425,000 for mine action made necessary as a result of the flooding.

The rapid and effective response of the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, the United Nations Children's Fund, the World Food Programme, the World Health Organization, the United Nations Development Programme and other United Nations agencies demonstrates once again the essential nature of the role of the United Nations in providing humanitarian assistance to people in need in crisis situations. Canada expresses its sincere appreciation for the dedication and determination of the United Nations and other humanitarian organizations in responding to this emergency.

Canada expresses its hope that the draft resolution will be adopted by consensus today to show the support of the international community for the efforts of Mozambique to respond to this disaster and for longer-term reconstruction and development.

Mr. Kanu (Sierra Leone): I thank the President very much, on behalf of my delegation, for convening this meeting to consider draft resolution A/54/L.79, on the disaster in Mozambique. As one of the sponsors of the draft resolution, my delegation supports it, and I wish to associate my delegation with the statement made by the Ambassador of Egypt on behalf of the African Group.

Before I proceed further, let me reiterate, on behalf of the Government and the people of Sierra Leone, and on my own behalf, our heartfelt sympathy and condolences to the Government and the people of Mozambique in this, their hour of need.

What befell Mozambique can happen to any country; in fact, it has happened to some other countries. In this regard, my delegation is grateful to the international community and the United Nations and its agencies for the rapidity of the response to this humanitarian catastrophe.

We are still in the first phase of dealing with this disaster. We must now begin to think about the next phase, which is the reconstruction and rehabilitation phase. We urge the international community and the United Nations system to begin to put in place mechanisms for meeting the challenges of the next phase. Resources should be provided to meet those challenges.

Yesterday, in the Economic and Social Council meeting on this problem, the representative of Namibia proposed the inclusion in this draft resolution of a paragraph on the matter of cancelling all bilateral loans, whether commercial or otherwise, to Mozambique. We thought that a paragraph reflecting that proposal would have been included in the draft resolution. However, such a paragraph has not been included. Notwithstanding that fact, my delegation still supports the spirit and intent of this draft resolution. We understand that some countries have already begun to cancel the commercial bilateral debts of Mozambique. We welcome those initiatives.

Mr. Osio (Nigeria): On behalf of the Group of 77 and China, we commend the initiative to convene this meeting to discuss the tragic situation in Mozambique, which resulted from the unprecedented floods that have been unleashed on that country and some of its neighbours since February. We should also like to take this opportunity to thank the Permanent Representative of Mozambique for his briefings to date, which have been very informative. Through him, the Group of 77 and China has conveyed its deep sympathy to the Government and people of Mozambique for the sad loss of hundreds of lives and the massive destruction of property, sources of livelihood and infrastructure. This is indeed a trying moment for a country that has only recently been recovering from the ravages of a civil war and that had been registering modest economic growth, which the tragic floods have now set back.

Natural disasters such as this flooding are phenomena about which no nation has a choice, and only a few, if any, have the national means to cope with the disastrous effects on their own, without outside assistance. This fact underscores the commonality of humanity and the interdependence of mankind, which our

Organization has always sought to uphold and promote. It is in this light that the Group of 77 and China welcomes the efforts of the Government of Mozambique and its appeal for international humanitarian assistance. We are heartened that the United Nations and its specialized agencies have supported that appeal so well that the international response is now in continuous flow. We urge the international donor community not to stop that flow of international economic assistance to Mozambique.

We have found in the engagement on this issue a commonality of purpose. Not only has the Security Council been engaged with this issue, but the Economic and Social Council itself, with its advantageous role in coordinating humanitarian assistance, has also deliberated on this issue, and has proposed to take it up during its substantive session this year.

Now, we are no less heartened that the General Assembly has seen fit to come up with a deliberative exercise that will go to the root cause and provide assistance and benefits, not only in the immediate future and the short term, but in the long term, to the people of Mozambique. It is in this light that we call for the adoption of draft resolution A/54/L.79.

While I have the floor, I would like to add that the Group of 77 and China likewise extends its sympathy and solidarity to the Government and people of Madagascar over a similar calamity, which was brought about by cyclone Gloria.

Humanity is one. We send our sincere condolences to all the countries that are affected.

The Acting President: The Assembly will now take a decision on draft resolution A/54/L.79, entitled "Assistance to Mozambique following the devastating floods".

Before proceeding to take action on the draft resolution, I should like to announce the updated list of countries that have become sponsors of draft resolution A/54/L.79 since its introduction: Algeria, Andorra, Angola, Antigua and Barbuda, Argentina, Australia, Austria, Bangladesh, Barbados, Belarus, Belgium, Benin, Bhutan, Bolivia, Brazil, Bulgaria, Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Canada, Cape Verde, Chile, China, Colombia, Costa Rica, Croatia, Cuba, the Czech Republic, Denmark, Djibouti, Ecuador, Egypt, El Salvador, Ethiopia, Finland, France, Gabon, Germany, Greece, Guinea-Bissau, Guyana, Haiti, Honduras, Hungary, Iceland, India, Indonesia, the Islamic Republic of Iran, Ireland, Israel, Italy, Jamaica, Japan, Liechtenstein, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Madagascar, Malta, Mauritius, Mexico, Monaco, Morocco, Namibia, the Netherlands, New Zealand, Nicaragua, Nigeria, Norway, Pakistan, Papua New Guinea, Poland, Portugal, the Republic of Moldova, Romania, Rwanda, San Marino, Seychelles, Sierra Leone, Slovakia, Slovenia, Solomon Islands, South Africa, Spain, Sri Lanka, Suriname, Sweden, the Syrian Arab Republic, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Togo, Trinidad and Tobago, Turkey, Ukraine, the United Arab Emirates, the United Kingdom, the United Republic of Tanzania, the United States of America, Uruguay, Uzbekistan, Venezuela, Viet Nam and Zimbabwe.

May I take it that the Assembly decides to adopt draft resolution A/54/L.79?

Draft resolution A/54/L.79 was adopted (resolution 54/96 L).

The President: I call on the representative of Mozambique.

Mr. Dos Santos (Mozambique): Allow me to begin by thanking you, Sir, for having convened this meeting and for including the consideration of the draft resolution on assistance to Mozambique following the devastating floods, under agenda item 20 (b), "Special economic assistance to individual countries or regions".

I wish to express the gratitude of my delegation to the Permanent Representative of Egypt for his statement and for having introduced the draft resolution to the Assembly on behalf of the African Group.

Mozambique is going through an unprecedented tragedy. Torrential rain, both in Mozambique and in neighbouring countries, and cyclone Eline produced severe floods in the central and southern parts of the country that resulted in the tragic loss of human lives and extensive destruction of property. The floods left more than 900 people dead and 900,000 directly affected and in desperate need of urgent emergency relief, while 2 million have been otherwise affected by the floods, also needing shelter, food, clean water and health care.

The floods have had a very negative socio-economic impact that includes the destruction of roads and bridges; the disruption of rail tracks; extensive damage to the water supply system, power lines, schools, health

centres, hospitals, wells and sewage systems; and the loss of cattle and more than 100,000 hectares of food and cash crops. This will lead to food security problems and loss of income. To add to this gloomy picture, we have witnessed the outbreak of water-borne diseases, particularly cholera and malaria, exposing the affected populations to another serious threat.

Another area of concern is the danger of landmines, as the floods have shifted and exposed these deadly weapons, which pose a serious threat to the population and will definitely undermine resettlement programmes, rehabilitation and reconstruction efforts.

The Government of Mozambique has taken the necessary measures to address this unfolding tragedy. A nationwide campaign of solidarity with the flood victims was launched with the aim of collecting donations in cash, food, clothes and other essential material goods. The Government also dispatched senior cabinet ministers to the affected areas to assess the extent of the damage and oversee the relief operations. The National Institute for Disaster Management was placed under the leadership of the Minister for Foreign Affairs and Cooperation to give the necessary political direction and guidance, as well as facilitating and speeding up the decision-making process.

At the operative level, the Government benefitted from the precious and generous help of neighbouring countries, particularly South Africa, in conducting the first relief operations to save lives and alleviate the suffering of the victims.

With an initial assessment of 150,000 people affected, on 10 February this year the Government launched its first international emergency appeal for humanitarian assistance, amounting to $2.7 million, to mitigate the devastating effects of the floods. As the flooding worsened as cyclone Eline ravaged Mozambique and the neighbouring countries, on 23 February the Government of Mozambique launched its second international emergency appeal for $65 million, based on an initial number of 300,000 affected people.

The extent of the devastation by the floods, both in Mozambique and in the neighbouring countries, led to a ministerial meeting in Pretoria on 3 March of the four most severely hit countries in southern Africa — Botswana, Mozambique, South Africa and Zimbabwe — to seek a regional response to the disaster. At this meeting, these countries committed themselves to continuing to promote coordination and cooperation in addressing the current and future disasters, decided to develop a regional action plan in response to the disaster and strongly recommended the possibility of setting up a disaster management unit of the Southern African Development Community (SADC).

The disaster we are facing in Mozambique is unquestionably having an overwhelming negative impact on the economic, social and humanitarian situation of the country that needs to be addressed, as it is undermining the remarkable socio-economic progress achieved during the last five years.

In addressing the effects of the floods, a pragmatic and comprehensive approach is necessary. This approach should include emergency rescue operations and identification of basic needs; stabilization of the conditions of the rescued populations; resettlement of displaced populations and emergency rehabilitation of essential infrastructures; and recovery and long-term reconstruction.

As emergency relief, rehabilitation and reconstruction of key infrastructures are pursued with a view to ensuring the resettlement of the displaced people and the ultimate resumption of normal life, the question of landmines requires special attention. Therefore, there will be a need for flood-related mine action that will include mine awareness, mine surveys and mine clearance. To this end, the Government of Mozambique counts on the valuable support of the United Nations Mine Action Service, funds and programmes and the international community at large.

In its efforts to deal effectively with this catastrophe, the Government of Mozambique has benefited from the generous and substantial assistance of the international community. We have received from all corners of the world messages of sympathy and solidarity, as well as aid and assistance. At this juncture, allow me, on behalf of the people and the Government of Mozambique, to express our sincere gratitude to the world for this outstanding support.

The international assistance rendered to us so far has played an instrumental role in the emergency relief efforts, by bringing much-needed help to those who have lost almost all their belongings and are now facing serious nutritional, hygiene and health problems. We wish to avail ourselves of this opportunity to express our most sincere appreciation to those creditor nations that have partially or completely cancelled the external debt owed by Mozambique.

We are confident that with determination and support from our partners, and the readiness of the international community to promptly respond to the appeals for emergency aid and assistance, the country will overcome the crisis and move towards normalizing the lives of the flood victims.

In order to bring about a sustainable resettlement, speedy recovery process and the normalization of the lives of the affected people, we need to combine humanitarian assistance with medium- and long-term rehabilitation and reconstruction efforts. This will be possible only with adequate, timely and steady assistance from the international community. The draft resolution presented by the Chairman of the African Group this morning seeks to provide the appropriate framework for immediate, medium-term and long-term action by the international community in support of the Mozambican Government's efforts.

The emergency relief programmes being undertaken in Mozambique are based on effective coordination among the Government, the donor community, the United Nations and non-governmental organizations.

For the resettlement of displaced people and the recovery, long-term rehabilitation and reconstruction of key elements of the infrastructure, a joint technical team has been formed to prepare a report to be presented at the international donor conference to assist Mozambique in its rehabilitation and reconstruction. The Government of Mozambique welcomes the holding of such a vital conference and hopes that adequate pledges will be made during it.

We commend the important role played by the United Nations through its funds and specialized agencies, namely the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, the World Food Programme, the United Nations Development Programme, the United Nations Children's Fund and the World Health Organization, among others. The leadership that has been provided by the Secretary-General from the beginning of the process is highly appreciated by my Government. The appointment of Mr. Ross Mountain has been instrumental in improving the much-needed coordination and the mobilization of additional resources.

We are equally touched by the expressions of sympathy, solidarity and support from the President of the General Assembly, the President of the Security Council, the President of the Economic and Social Council and the Secretary-General. We also wish to express our appreciation to the President of the Economic and Social Council and all Council members for the unprecedented meeting held yesterday to discuss the situation in Mozambique.

We would also like to encourage the United Nations system to continue to play its leading role in the mobilization and coordination of international assistance to Mozambique, particularly in preparing and organizing the international donor conference.

Once again, I wish to thank the President of the General Assembly and all the Member States that have sponsored and supported the adoption of the draft resolution on assistance to Mozambique, and that have expressed solidarity and offered assistance.

Mr. Bakoniarivo (Madagascar) (*spoke in French*): In view of the devastation the natural disaster has inflicted on Mozambique, let me extend to the Government of the Republic of Mozambique, on behalf of the Government of the Republic of Madagascar, our sincere and sorrowful condolences. We also extend our best wishes to the courageous people of Mozambique.

The delegation of Madagascar welcomes the adoption of the resolution on Mozambique, which Madagascar co-sponsored.

On behalf of my Government, I would like to take this opportunity to express to the Acting President our sincere gratitude for the sympathy he showed to my country, which is currently suffering the ravages of the natural disaster, which have been aggravated by various epidemics.

I hope that the appeal that the Acting President made earlier will lead to a positive response. I would also like to thank the entire international community, through the representatives of the various countries, regions and groups who today have expressed their sympathy regarding my country. These were the representatives of Egypt, Solomon Islands, Trinidad and Tobago, India, the United States of America, Indonesia, Brazil, Portugal, South Africa, Canada, Sierra Leone and Nigeria.

Mr. Osio (Nigeria): Concerning our deliberations on the resolution that has just been adopted, we want to have it on record that the following slight amendment would have been added to the text. After the last preambular paragraph, would have been added:

"Taking note further of the Economic and Social Council presidential statement on the floods in Mozambique".

This is just for the record.

The Acting President: The observation by the representative of Nigeria has been taken note of.

The General Assembly has thus concluded this stage of its consideration of the sub-item (b) of agenda item 20.

The meeting rose at 11.30 a.m.